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WTOP (Washington) and  
the CBS Network

5 March 1959

INTERVIEW WITH SEN. FULBRIGHT

STATINTL

World Tonight, CBS Reports, at 11:15 P.M. over WTOP  
(Washington) and the CBS Network:

DANIEL SCHORR: "The Soviet offense against Berlin has become so intense that it has caused the Democrats in our country to defer their public criticism of the Republican administration for the moment. Democratic Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been principally responsible for this restraint. He has been reluctant to express his views during this crisis. Yet the Senator has some deep reservations about our policy and we discussed them with Senator Fulbright in his office today. We spoke first of this latest statement by Khrushchev offering to delay the Berlin deadline and asked whether the Senator thought this meant a more flexible stand on Khrushchev's part."

FULBRIGHT: "Yes, I think it is an indication that perhaps he wants to be reasonable and that he is determined to have a showdown in a positive way. I welcome such a suggestion."

SCHORR: "The question, of course, is what is meant by reasonable negotiations and I think we can conclude that what Khrushchev wants is a summit conference. He's accepted conditionally a foreign ministers conference, at the same time denounced that it's almost useless. Our administration doesn't yet seem ready to go into a summit conference, although Prime Minister Macmillan seems more favorable. What do you think our attitude should be?"

FULBRIGHT: "I'm inclined to think that we should accept the summit conference as a regular—as a regular part of our diplomatic negotiations. I agree that in the past it has had a certain sanctity as being a matter of greatest importance and most profound significance. Therefore, it had to be prepared in advance. But there are reasons, especially the reason of—that grows out of the power structure of Russia, that there really isn't any second man in a sense, and that unless you have Khrushchev, or whoever is in his position, you have practically nothing at all, and I think we might recognize it and accept summit conferences as a regular thing, maybe twice a year, and approach them without expecting them to settle everything, that they truly are merely negotiating discussion meeting, that we don't have a formal agenda, and we could well consider that we wouldn't end them with a communique, because I'm confident it wouldn't settle all these matters, but it might discuss them."

"I believe in as much discussion of our problems as possible among responsible people. I'm not very optimistic about this whole business, but when we consider all the various alternatives, I think this might be a good approach, and I always feel squeamish about saying no, no, no,

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we don't want to talk. It leaves an impression that we are afraid of them, or that we don't have anything to say. Actually, we've got a lot to say. I don't think we say it very well. I don't think we say it effectively from the point of view of the rest of the world, and I think we ought to take a little different approach, a little lighter touch and say, sure, we'll have one this June, and we'll have one next December, and every June and December from now on, and maybe some of these days we'll come to have a little confidence in one another and a little understanding."

SCHORR: "Well, now, the objection might be raised that the President in his constitutional function of chief of state, as well as head of the government, wouldn't be free to do that much traveling."

FULBRIGHT: "Well, in the old days it's certainly true, because it took a long time; today with modern jets, he can be any place that's probable—that we would probably use, within a very few hours."

SCHORR: "You've taken the position, I believe, that it is not the role of the legislature to put too much detailed pressure on the administration which does have the responsibility in foreign affairs."

FULBRIGHT: "I don't think it's our role to lay down by resolution the specifics of negotiations which we are about to enter into. I think it's our function to advise with the administration, certainly to agree with them and even to pass resolutions on general terms, on principles that are broad and within which they can negotiate fully. And I wouldn't, there, like to do it without advising with them. We are, after all, the secondary part; we're an important partner, of course. I don't mean to say we don't play an important part, but they are the initiating body and the negotiating body, and we're the advising body."

SCHORR: "Well, now, as the advising body, the question may come up, if there are frequent summit meetings, as you suggest, it will be quite a big job for the President, especially if not accompanied by the Secretary of State, and more than once there's been a suggestion that one or more senators, and especially the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, might be useful at such a summit conference. Would you be willing to go along?"

FULBRIGHT: "Well, if I was invited, but I doubt very seriously that that is—that that's so. I think on very rare occasions perhaps they would play a proper function, but this is a matter for professionals. I've tried already in letters to the Secretary, and in every way I can, to upgrade the quality and responsibility of the professionals in our Foreign Service, and this kind of job—the negotiation of these difficult matters should be primarily in the hands of professionals and not amateurs, and in a sense, senators in this field are amateurs. We must always remember, the head men—and you've been in Russia a long time—the head men in Russia are not amateurs. Mr. Khrushchev hasn't just left his private corporation to come to Moscow for a couple of years."

SCHORR: "There wouldn't be any private corporation for him to leave."

FULBRIGHT: "Or even his farm or any place else. I mean, they are professionals; he's been in this business all his life. Mikoyan was here,

said he'd been a minister of some kind since 1926."

SCHORR: "You've not suggesting that we do away with elections in order to keep our elected officials in office longer?"

FULBRIGHT: "I'm suggesting that if this country is going to survive, it had better be electing people with greater experience and competence in the job they expect them to do, and that goes for all of them. I think that amateurs in matters of great importance are a disaster to our country now; that goes for the Supreme Court or the Presidency or the Senate or the House. We need people who are familiar with the kind of work they're going to perform."

SCHORR: "Well, you seem not satisfied, Senator, with the type of people in high elected office in this country, but doesn't this country pretty much get what it wants?"

FULBRIGHT: "Well, I certainly think that they got what they wanted. The present President got the largest majority in the history of the country. I may say I wasn't among that majority; I've never supported him, and I don't approve of bringing military generals into political office—I don't care who they are or how good a man they are. I think it's a misfit, anymore than you ask me to take out your appendix., I think you'd be a foolish man if you did ask me—"

SCHORR: "I have no such plan."

FULBRIGHT: "—and I think the American people were foolish in asking a general who had retired to be president."

(End)